



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel

GCSE Psychology (1PS0) Paper 1

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Introduction

This was the second sitting of the new GCSE 9-1 1PS0 Psychology and the small number of students who entered in this extraordinary Autumn series found the paper similarly accessible to the those who sat the paper in 2019.

Students found some of the short, factual knowledge based questions more accessible this series which was pleasing. Questions 9c and 13a are good examples where candidates did a better job of recalling basic information from compulsory studies listed on the specification. This was a focus of improvement for centres and students from the 2019 series so this improvement, albeit with a very small cohort, was pleasing.

Questions that required understanding gave a similar performance to the 2019 series, with the best responses giving full descriptions and elaboration where necessary. Questions 2 and 19 are examples of this question type.

Some questions required AO1 knowledge and then AO2 application, such as questions 3a or 20, which were accessible by most, with some well very well-answered and most students tending to pick up at least one mark in general on these.

Questions that required conclusions were less well-answered in this series, with students struggling to interpret some of the data appropriately. Examples are question 4a or question 16.

Questions that asked for improvements or strengths or weaknesses were questions that students again struggled with. As with 2019, it was very common for generic responses with strengths or weaknesses or for improvements. Students need to give fully contextualised responses and also fully justify any ideas they have where relevant and appropriate.

As with 2019, the essays again tended to be imbalanced and so a clear improvement for future series would be to ensure balance and more AO3 content in particular.

The remainder of this Examiner Report will focus on each individual question and specific examples of candidate responses which can be used to help prepare students for future 1PS0/01 examinations.

Question 1a

Students were required to state what is meant by a 'fixed mindset' for this question. Most students were able to give an accurate definition of a fixed mindset.

Question 1b

Students were required to state what is meant by a 'growth mindset' for this question. Most students were able to give an accurate definition of a growth mindset.

Question 2

For this question students needed to describe the role of the cerebellum during development. The majority of students were able to get at least one mark for brief accurate description of the role of the cerebellum with the best responses offering elaboration.

Question 3a

For this question, students were awarded one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of Piaget and Inhelder's (1956) Three Mountains task, and a second mark for exemplification of how the study could be used to explain the scenario. The majority of candidates scored one mark for being able to correctly interpret the scenario with Sarah's daughter's stage of development but the best responses also gave some accurate findings from the Piaget and Inhelder's (1956) Three Mountains task too.

Question 3b

Students needed to explain one strength and one weakness of Sarah's investigation for this question. They achieved the first mark for identification of the strength or weakness and a further mark for justification of the strength or weakness. Students struggled with this question with a lot of generic answers. The strength was generally more creditworthy than the weakness, with the best responses giving a contextualised response that was fully justified.

Question 4a

For this question, students needed to explain two conclusions that could be made using the data in Table 1. They were awarded one mark for each conclusion made and a further mark for justification of each conclusion. The best responses identified and fully justified two conclusions, but these were in the minority. Weaker responses tended to identify inappropriate conclusions, or repeat the data from the table with no conclusion.

Question 4b

Students were required to explain how Mr Harris could help his class improve their performance on the test for this question. They were awarded One mark for accurate understanding of Willingham's learning theory and a second mark for exemplification of how the theory could be used to explain the scenario. The majority of students scored at least one mark for being able to offer a relevant strategy the teacher could use, with the best responses also showing understanding of the theory too.

Question 5

Students needed to state two findings of Bartlett's (1932) study for this question. The majority of students scored at least one mark with most getting two accurate findings.

Question 6

For this question, students were required to define what is meant by 'retrieval' as part of the process of memory for one mark. The vast majority were able to accurately identify the term without giving a tautological response.

Question 7a

Students were required to explain one reason for the higher performance of class 1 compared to class 2. They were awarded one mark for accurate understanding of the Multi-store Model of Memory and a second mark for exemplification of how the theory could be used to explain the scenario. Students struggled to give a relevant and appropriate reason for the scenario using the theory in general. The best responses focused on the capacity of the STM and then applied this appropriately to the scenario.

Question 7b

Students needed to explain one conclusion that could be made regarding the type of distribution shown in Figure 3. They were awarded one mark for appropriate conclusion made with a further mark for justification of the conclusion through analysis/interpretation. Students really struggled to identify the type of distribution in the graph and centres should ensure they can interpret histograms appropriately for future series.

Question 7c

For this question, students needed to explain one improvement that Lara could have made to her investigation. There was mixed student performance, with some unable to give a relevant improvement, whereas others were able to identify a relevant improvement, with the best responses also fully justifying how this would improve her study.

Question 8a

Students were required to explain why Chelsea remembered more items on Sunday for this question. They were awarded one mark for accurate understanding of Peterson and Peterson (1959), and a second mark for exemplification of how the study could be used to explain the scenario. The majority of students scored at least one mark for application of the study to the scenario, but the best responses also gave some accurate understanding from the study too.

Question 8b

Students needed to explain two weaknesses of using Peterson and Peterson (1959) to account for Chelsea's memory of the shopping lists. They were given one mark for identification of each weakness and a further mark for justification of each weakness. The best responses gave two relevant weaknesses which were both applied to the scenario and fully justified. Weaker responses identified a relevant weakness and applied it only with no justification or gave purely generic responses.

Question 9c

Students were required to state two findings from Young's (2007) study for this question. The majority of students scored at least one mark for this question, with the best giving two clear findings from the study.

Question 10a

For this question, students needed to explain one way that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) could be used to help Kesia's addiction. They were awarded one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of cognitive behavioural therapy and a second mark for exemplification of how the therapy could be used for Kesia's addiction. Students generally scored at least one mark for this question, applying CBT to the scenario in a relevant way. The best responses also gave some well-expressed understanding of CBT too.

Question 10b

Students needed to explain one weakness of using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for Kesia's addiction for this question. They achieved one mark for identification of a weakness, with the second mark for justification. Students struggled in general with this question, with the majority scoring zero or one mark, which was commonly related to motivation. The best responses fully justified a relevant weakness in context.

Question 11a

Students were required to explain how genes could have contributed to Rachel's diagnosis of depression, using a study in their answer for this question. They were awarded one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of a suitable study, and a second mark for exemplification of how the study could have been used to explain the scenario. The majority of students scored one mark for either showing understanding of a suitable study, such as Caspi et al. (2003), or for application to the scenario. The best candidates did both.

Question 11b

Students needed to explain one weakness of the influence of genes as an explanation of Rachel's depression for this question. One mark was awarded for identification of a weakness with a second mark for justification. There was a mixed performance from students with the weaker responses giving a generic response or inaccurate ideas, with the stronger responses identifying a weakness in context and the best fully justified this too. There were a number of students who showed a misunderstanding of the term 'reductionism' in their response so this is an area centres can reinforce for future series.

Question 12a

For this question, students needed to explain one conclusion that could be made from the data in Table 2 regarding the use of the drug 8-Gv2 for depression. One mark was given for a relevant conclusion with a second mark for justification. There was a split in performance with a lot of candidates doing very well and getting full marks, but others misunderstanding the results and gaining no credit, with very few in between.

Question 12b

Students needed to explain one improvement that could have been made to the drug treatment study for this question. They were given one mark for identification of a relevant improvement and a second mark for justification. Student performance varied with the best responses offering a relevant conclusion and fully justifying it, whereas weaker responses tended to identify the improvement without justification or gave an irrelevant or inappropriate improvement.

Question 13a

Students were required to state one aim of the Damasio et al. (1994) study for this question. Students performed well in general, being able to state an accurate aim of the study. Weaker responses focused on the change in behaviour rather than the actual aim(s) of the study.

Question 13b

For this question, students were required to state one part of the procedure used in Damasio et al. (1994). Where students gained credit, most focused on the 3D image of the brain, but those not gaining credit gave information about the wrong study or about the behaviour change, as with part (a).

Question 14

Students needed to explain one way Neha will be affected by the condition she has been diagnosed with for this question. The first mark was for accurate understanding of prosopagnosia, and the subsequent mark was awarded for exemplification of how prosopagnosia can be used to explain the scenario. Most students gained at least one mark for saying what prosopagnosia was with some understanding. The best answers also applied this to the scenario appropriately.

Question 15a

Students were required to explain one strength and one weakness of Ishfaq's investigation into the patient with damage to his corpus callosum for this question. Students were awarded one mark for identification of the strength or weakness and a further mark for justification of each. Students struggled to give both a strength and weakness which were justified fully and applied to the context. Most students were able to gain at least one mark, usually for the weakness and focused on generalisability.

Question 15b

Students were required to explain one problem that Ishfaq's patient may experience as a result of the damage to his corpus callosum in the experimental tasks given by Ishfaq. They were given One mark for accurate understanding of the role of the corpus callosum, with a second mark for exemplification of how the role of the corpus callosum could be used to explain the scenario. Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark, with a lot getting full marks for showing understanding of the corpus callosum and application to the context. Those that gained no marks tended to think the corpus callosum was another part of the brain.

Question 16

Students needed to explain two conclusions you can make from the data in Table 3 regarding 'JL-2' for this question. They were given one mark for identification of each conclusion a further mark for justification of this using the data. The majority of students gained at least one mark for at least one conclusion with those that gained two usually for two brief conclusions. The best responses supported accurate conclusions with evidence from the data table.

Question 17

Students were required to define the term 'culture' for this question. Students defined the term well with most gaining one mark.

Question 18b

For this question, students needed to explain why Junbin and his friends may be less likely to act aggressively at the shopping centre than at the park, whilst referring to Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo (1973). They gained one mark for demonstrating accurate understanding of Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo (1973), and a second mark for exemplification of how Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo (1973) can be used to explain the scenario. The best responses focused on deindividuation and accurately used this to explain the scenario in an appropriate way. Some students focused on them just fearing getting in trouble without any relevant link to the study or gave an irrelevant suggestion.

Question 18c

Students needed to explain two weaknesses of using Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo's (1973) study as an explanation of the change in behaviour of Junbin and his friends at the shopping centre for this question. They were awarded one mark for identification of each weakness and a further mark for justification of each weakness. Students tended to gain some credit, usually for their first weakness and then struggled to elaborate for the second mark. Only the best responses gave two weaknesses that were both fully justified and in context. Some gave purely generic responses.

Question 19

Students were required to describe how one situational factor could affect bystander intervention for this question. Most students gained at least one mark, generally focusing on either diffusion of responsibility or pluralistic ignorance. The best responses fully elaborated for the second mark.

Question 20

For this question, students were required to explain one personal factor that could affect Kareem's decision about whether to help the older woman in the scenario. One mark was awarded for demonstrating accurate understanding of a personal factor affecting bystander intervention, and a further mark was given for exemplification of how the personal factor affecting bystander intervention could be used to explain the scenario. Some students misinterpreted this question and gave a situational factor for him not helping. The creditable responses tended to focus on mood or similarity to the victim, with the best giving full elaboration.

Question 21

Students needed to explain two improvements that could have been made to Joe's study into conformity to majority influence for this question. The first mark was given for identification of each relevant improvement, with a further mark for justification of each improvement. Students struggled to suggest two relevant and appropriate improvements in the majority of cases with most being able to suggest one. The best responses said why the improvement would benefit the study whereas weaker responses did not include such justification. Some students gave inappropriate or irrelevant suggestions.

Question 22

This question required students to assess the possible contribution of both nature and nurture for Amir's addiction to his computer video game. This was an extended open response question with the 'Assess' taxonomy which targets AO1, AO2 and AO3 content. AO1 was looking for knowledge and understanding of nature and nurture, AO2 was for application to the scenario, and AO3 was analysis and evaluation of nature and nurture leading to judgements/conclusions of how useful they would be for the scenario given about Amir. Assessment of this question was through a level-based mark scheme where a 'best-fit' approach was used; deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Each AO was judged separately and where the components met the requirement for the level fully (and perhaps has elements of the level above), then marks were awarded at the top of the level. Where the components met the level but only just about, they are awarded marks at the bottom end of the level. When a response was imbalanced (i.e. one or more AOs were stronger than another) a compromise was found. Consideration was also given regarding this question requiring balance between the AOs (AO1 3, AO2 3, AO3 3). The best responses used definitions of nature and nurture using examples (AO1). They then applied these terms to Amir in the scenario accurately (AO2) and then attempted to analyse this further using evaluation and came to appropriate judgements regarding why nature and nurture might be useful or not to explain Amir's situation about addiction (AO3). Most of the responses had very little or no AO3 which limited the performance of those student responses. Generally, definitions of nature and nurture were very brief and students most commonly talked about genes and social learning theory for Amir's addiction.

Question 23

This question required was a synoptic essay which required students to assess Petra's behaviour using two areas of psychology that they had studied. This was an extended open response question with the 'Assess' taxonomy which targets AO1, AO2 and AO3 content. AO1 was looking for knowledge and understanding of psychological content, AO2 was for application to the scenario, and AO3 was analysis and evaluation of the psychological content leading to judgements/conclusions of how useful it would be for the scenario given about Petra. Assessment of this question was through a level-based mark scheme where a 'best-fit' approach was used; deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Each AO was judged separately and where the components met the requirement for the level fully (and perhaps has elements of the level above), then marks were awarded at the top of the level. Where the components met the level but only just about, they are awarded marks at the bottom end of the level. When a response was imbalanced (i.e. one or more AOs were stronger than another) a compromise was found. Consideration was also given regarding this question requiring balance between the AOs (AO1 3, AO2 3, AO3 3). The best responses gave at

least two areas of psychology, of which social influence (topic 5) and development (topic 1) were the most commonly used, and then went on to apply these to the scenario involving Petra and attempted some evaluation too. Weaker responses tended to be rather superficial and gave very brief AO1 statements that usually blended into the AO2 application and then made no attempt to evaluate. Candidates need to try and balance the three assessment objectives (AOs) required in these essays and also for Q23 need to consider the synoptic element of using at least two areas of psychology they have studied (the 'areas' are the different topics learned so candidates need to do more than use development (topic 1) in two different ways, for example).

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, students should:

- Ensure they continue to learn basic information about compulsory studies and other key terms or concepts listed on the specification.
- Fully contextualise all responses where they are given a scenario. Purely generic responses when asked to apply to a scenario cannot be awarded credit.
- Consider data carefully and give appropriate conclusions when asked to do so and not just describe the data they are given.
- Balance essays with equal AO1, AO2, and AO3 material. AO3 in particular was lacking in both 2019 and this Autumn series.